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# HARKING BACK

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## Harking Back











L. M. G. Lenny.



# Harking Back



BY

L. M. GLENN



Furman University  
Greenville, S. C.  
1908

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To My  
Alma Mater





## My Purpose.

Just a bit o' love come let me,  
And I thought I'd get a way,  
Just I'd forget, all you'd forget,  
Oed comes in a day.

The Author.





San Francisco, Cal.,

July 8, 1933.

Dr. J. R. Geiger,  
President Stetson University,  
De Land, Fla.

My Dear "Runt":

Forsooth, my dear old gal, there is not much in a name; for from the right lofty salutation of this letter I come tumbling down the dizzy flights of your career, and dub you with that wonderful appellation which you bore with such noble, Christian fortitude in days of "ye longe ago."

And what a troop of Knights of Thought come surging through the halls of Memory's sacred castle as I lower the drawbridge of sweet Reminiscence over the billowy moat of fast-



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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flowing Time. And right unwillingly, too, do I hearken to the challenging call of the bold knight, Sir Reflection. But I know I am not prepared to withstand a siege; for I find, as I grow older, that those defenses of "matter-of-factness" which I have thrown up against the onslaughts of Sentiment's sable-robed hosts grow weaker, and sometimes, ere I am aware of it, the subtle enemy has broken over my crumbling ramparts and I awake to find myself a prisoner of King Sentimentalist and all his vast array of the Bitter-Sweet. And then, not until I have paid the ransoming heartache, or sigh, or tear, am I free from his gloomy citadel.

Old gal, you can't imagine what profound pleasure it gives me to say to



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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my friends that I was a classmate of Dr. Geiger, the great and good President of Stetson University; and more, his roommate for one year. And just to think, the same four walls contained him and me at the same time. Those same old walls heard our hearts' secrets, our air-castle plans, our loves and our prayers—though mine were not so voluble and did not ring so true or soar so high heavenward as his. And I have seen this great man in all phases of domestic and public life; have seen him when dignity was to him a stranger; have seen him bathe his feet in the coal-scuttle; have been foraging with him at midnight into the kitchen stronghold; have seen him, in pink-striped nightshirt, cut a somersault and light in bed. It all makes



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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me feel that in some way I can at least lay a claim to fame.

Geiger, old beau, I was not surprised when the Associated Press wired me the news of your election to the Presidency of Stetson. When I had finished my last editorial for "The Examiner" I went straight home and broke the joyful news to my wife. She was delighted and clapped her hands in such glee she waked up little—hey there, old gal, I was about to forget to tell you, the little red-headed dickens weighs eleven pounds and can out-squall a Sioux chief. My wife says he favors me, but I won't stand for it, be it praise or slander.

So that night after tea I took down my Tennyson and read myself to sleep. I dreamed of days of long ago. I



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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awoke and thought of your greatness and remembered a prophecy I made once upon a time. It was back in dear old college days. You were in my room one morning just before chapel hour. I was feeling pretty "bum" at that particular time. I was enjoying that state of hilarity so characteristic of the cold, gray dawn of the "morning after." And you were adding to the pleasure of my reverie by giving me a lecture on temperance. As I remember now, I turned wearily to you and said, "Old gal, don't you worry about me. It will all come out in the wash. I've never made a habit of it. It's the first time since I've been in college, and it will be the last. And, by the gods! I'll be somebody yet. Some day when you get to be a big college presi-



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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dent I'll be editor of a great daily newspaper; and I'll print a notice of your election in big letters on the front page of my paper, with a big cut of you accompanying the article." I have mailed you a copy of "The Examiner" containing the prophecied and materialized article.

Say, what has become of old "Work"? The last I heard of him was through the columns of the "London Times." The article said that he had been chosen one of ten delegates by the American Medical Association to the International Congress of Surgeons and Physicians, to be held in Vienna the coming winter. Well, I knew it, I just knew it.

As you remember, some of the boys used to paint pretty bad pictures of



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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old Work's future; but I always believed he would make good. You know, old gal, I think some of the boys at Furman didn't give old Work credit for what was at the bottom of him. 'Tis true he belonged to the "bird gang," but underneath his feathers there beat a noble and courageous heart. Oh! yes, he was often peculiar in his actions; but no fault of his. For where is the man that has no faults? I rejoice to hear of his great success, and I am going to dash off a "swell" editorial on "America's Representatives at the International Congress of Physicians and Surgeons," and old Work shall receive full justice, I assure you.

Say, old dog, do you remember that time he tumbled my bed, and in return I cleaned out his room from floor to



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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ceiling—beds, trunks, tables, dresser, chairs, pictures, etc.? And that finished, I hid these things in various parts of the dormitory and swept out his room and dusted the walls as a finishing touch? Gee! I sure got next to him! And from that day to this he has never molested my bed again. I am going to write to old Work real soon and ask him if he remembers those days of yore. How like a sweet dream of which only fragments are remembered; how like a withering flower by the wayside whose perfume has been stolen by passing breezes; how like a western heaven from whose ethereal canvas the glowing pigments have faded, are those days we spent together, which I now in memory recall from over the wild waste of years!



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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Well, old gal, it's growing late now and all is becoming still. The ferry-boat whistles are silent, and this tells me that it is past midnight. So I am going to turn in and joust with old Morpheus. I wonder what you are doing now—fast a-snoozing I guess? Somehow or other, old boy, I feel young tonight. I feel as though we were back at Furman in old Montague Hall again. We are in old B11 with a pile of books before us on the table; and behind that stack of Shakespere I seem to see the countenance of Ben Geer lurking. It seems that he is saying to me, "Dig there, you red-headed —"; but no, that's not true. For Ben Geer never uttered a command. Ah, how I remember—but there now, Runt, I must close up. Little Dit-



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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tie Bootes is calling to me from his crib, "Hey, papa Dittie, lights out and a prow turned toward the bed." Good-night.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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San Francisco, Cal.,  
December 12, 1933.

Hon. J. Wilbur Hicks,  
Speaker House of Representatives,  
Washington, D. C.

My Dear Old "Stix":

When you and I were college-mates, my dear Stix, I remember attending a revival meeting at the old First Church. I was in no little agitation of spirit that night, for I was considering the proposition of taking a seat on the Band Wagon of the Saints, by the side of you and some of the other fellows. I finally clambered up to a seat, but later lost out, on account of not keeping my instrument in proper tune. I am happy to say,



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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though, I have regained my seat and am beating the tambourine with great zest.

But I must back to my subject. I remember hearing the parson say, in part, "Consider how a trivial incident often changes the whole after life of a man; even a little stone may turn the course of a mighty river by intercepting the tiny rill far back in the mountain glades." Even so, dear Stix, an insignificant incident sometimes changes the course of one's thought, too, and turns it into new or long-forsaken paths. Such has been mine tonight. An insignificant occurrence—the finding of your grizzled visage upon a card-board in an ancient album—has turned my stream of thought into other paths. That single incident



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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was the little stone that halted the trend of my stream of thought and turned it aside.

But instead of the stream wending its way into a new channel, it found the dried-up course of other days. At first the stream pushed right tremulously into the forsaken channel, overgrown with the tangled vines of neglected remembrance, and filled with the moss-covered stones of long-forgotten episodes. As I grew more oblivious of the present the little stream trickled on, exploring old caverns of sorrow and rippling lightly over the golden sands of forgotten joys. Here the tiny brook met some moss-covered boulder which halted it in its course, but dampening the ancient moss with its quivering flood of



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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resurrecting thought, it passed on, and the boulder proved to be only some forgotten experience. By and by the stream gathered volume and sped on, whispering soft notes of sentiment as it rippled over some cascade of bedimmed pleasures. And gaining the valley at last in its hastening flight it found there broad fields of autumn-tinted recollections and lonely deserts of dead memories. The stream, however, did not cower at this dread sight but pushed gallantly out into the melancholy waste.

And now, as a consequence of that misguided stream, the wastes of past years have been brought to life and made to blossom with the joy of sweet remembered associations. That silent desert of forgotten days is now a lux-



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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uriant garden of green trees, bright flowers, singing birds, and dancing butterflies. And I stroll about over the soft grasses, and rest under the waving palms, and drink from bubbling fountains, wandering ever in happy reminiscence of college days. Long after the sun has set and the lustre of stars beam softly above I love to linger here, drinking in the silvery strains of the nightingale and sighing sadly in memory of days that were.

Well, Stix, I guess I had better get out of this vale of sentiment. But I love it. Alas, what secrets lie buried in the breast of the future! I scarcely know what to expect. Who would have thought, twenty-five years ago, that old Stix would one day be Speaker of the House? I always thought you



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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avored Joe Cannon, anyway. Well, old beau, I congratulate you. Don't turn fool now and spoil it all; and be sure to "soak" it to Hon. Kermit Roosevelt every time you get a chance. Do it just for the sake of his old daddy, whom we used to cuss so in our political broils at Furman.

Say, Stix, do you remember one bright, Sunday morning I came down to No. 14, arrayed in a brand-new dressing gown? And do you remember both of you jumped on me (always two to one) and stripped me as nude as a jaybird, and then chased me upstairs? Oh! I'll get even with you yet. I'll see that you never get in the race for President. Say, Stix, ain't you sorry you did it?



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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Old dog, I had a great surprise the other day in way of a letter from old "Quiz." As you know, he's in China now in the missionary business. Well, the old guy got there at last and I am glad to know it. He has turned all yellow now and has a "pigtail" hanging down his back; his eyes have assumed an oblique position and he can talk that heathen jargon like a Wu Ting Fang. Quiz was a great old fellow, but nature endowed him with too many faults. But his faults were mostly good ones. Quiz was too orthodox; by golly! he wouldn't give the Devil a fair chance. He was so pious, the Old Boy was afraid to tackle him. But, as it is not my intention to find fault, I will pass on. However, Quiz's one unpardonable fault was his ability



to jump, tail foremost, at conclusions. He often annoyed me by his rash judgment and preconceived notions to such an extent I was tempted to give him a sound "cussing." But that's not an uncommon fault of man. And I suppose Quiz was so sincere in everything the habit just grew into him. And besides, I believed he would get over it. Now, that he has gotten out into the world, I guess he has grown wiser; seeing that just a drachm of sin here and there in poor man's nature is not wholly bad, and that in spite of our small measure of grace we are all, in the grand order of God's loving ways, somehow good. But, as I have said, old Quiz was rock-bottom and true-blue; and if ever it falls to mortals to be crowned with a diadem of stars in



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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that great kingdom to come old Quiz will be there to receive a big, bright one.

Well, good-bye, old beau; write to me some time. Give my regards to Mrs. Hicks and pat little "J. W." on the head for me. So long.

P. S.—Had a card this morning announcing the entrance upon the stage of Life of one J. Roy Geiger, Jr.; not larger than a doughnut, son and heir of our illustrious classmate, "Runt."



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

Louisville, Ky.,  
November 14, 1934.

Rev. J. R. Quisenberry, LL. D.,  
Sup't American Mission Stations,  
Ramrie, Burma, India.

My Dear "Quiz":

On the lawn just before my library window stands a majestic tree, tall, gnarled, massive-limbed, and hoary with lichen growth. It is in the sad hush of autumn now, and the sweet birds of summer have forsaken their accustomed choir in the knotted branches. My old tree is silent now and the lisping songsters have winged their flight to sunnier climes. And there, where it is spring, sunshine and joy forever, they warble away the brief



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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span of their little lives, lending a touch of cheer to a sad, cold world and, I hope, at last themselves dying happy. The leaves have all lost their green, and as the chill of autumn creeps down from the north they sigh a sad farewell to the old nurse of summer days and silently fall from the weeping branches, to find rest in the arms of Mother Earth.

Quiz, as I sit musing by the fireside and watch the leaves on my old tree loose their hold, and see them caught up by passing winds and scattered hither and thither, I am reminded of a period of my life now far gone. In some way I have pictured that stately old tree as our dear Alma Mater, and the leaves as those that come to and go from its hallowed walls. The



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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gnarled oak, like our Alma Mater, has battled against the raging elements for many years, and will yet, I trust, see the birth and death of many seasons. But we are as the leaves that came so "green" and departed so "ripe." We lingered for a brief season and then at the commencement of our graduation year the chill winds of the world's stern reality came sweeping by and we were torn from the embrace of our tender nurse and scattered hither and thither upon a dark, frowning world.

The summer sun warms us, the winter snows chill us, and counter winds gather us up, and we are blown—whither? Some of us meet again and rejoice; some of us never meet again, but rejoice in one another's memory; and some of us neither meet again nor



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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remember one another. Alas! how sad that some did so little during our college course and were so disinterested in affairs, other than mere classroom work, that the lapse of just twenty-six brief years has erased every trace of their memory from our minds!

I have recently received a report of a meeting of the Alumni of Furman. In this little booklet is given, as nearly accurate as possible, a brief mention of the doings of the class of 1909. Taking it for granted that you would be interested in the careers of your classmates, I am going to mention such of those as you do not already know something about.

Of course, you remember old Jerry Barton. Jerry is the fellow who used to ring the bell. By George! I can see



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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him now hanging on that bell-rope like a chimpanzee on a bamboo. Well, Jerry is now President of the North Greenville High School. That institution has grown into a most formidable citadel of knowledge under his guidance. Rufie Barton, as some dubbed that illustrious knight on the field of those olden days, is revealing the treasures of the Holy Writ to the denizens of the Dark Corner. Deacon Cogburn and Wash Pinson, I understand, have taken to the missionary enterprise, and are now gleaning somewhere in the ripening harvest. Deacon is trampling down the sands where Confucius hath trod, while Wash is leading the forlorn hope of civilization into the wilds of Africa. And while I am in this vein of the celestials, I am



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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reminded that S. L. Watson is expostulating with the Cannibal gentry of Barneo as to why they should serve fried chicken rather than human steak when entertaining him under their star-studded roof.

Our class is also honored in two knights of the operating table. B. B. Earle and Hawkins are both located in Atlanta and have good practices. But behold! there are yet more. Ben Lancaster and Shorty Martin are professors, respectively, in the S. C. C. I. and the State University of Arkansas. And there is a Solon, too, numbered among those that departed from old Furman in 1909. Ezell is practicing law in Tennessee, and from all reports is very successful. This, I believe, leaves only



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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one more. Hassie Earle is City Engineer of Colon, Panama.

I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to write you anything concerning George Rice. I take it for granted you two still perpetuate ancient ties. I was recently in Virginia on business. I stopped over at the University of Virginia and, lo! whom should I meet with but old "Cotton-Top"—athletic director at that institution. George was in great spirits over a recent victory in football. His squad had swept the Cornell bunch clear off the grid-iron. George is extremely popular among the students, and what time he is not with his wife he is among the champions of the athletic field, urging them on to greater victories. I made him promise to pay me a visit next



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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summer, and I am looking forward with great pleasure to the event.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, old Quiz. This day I am printing in the "Courier-Journal" a 5x8 cut of one of our classmates, and a three-column story of his appointment as Ambassador to Germany. Lo! what will the morrow bring? I confess I am so gratified by this news I can scarcely contain myself. But perhaps you are anxious to know his name. Well, I am happy to say it is our good friend, R. E. Allen. What an honor it is to claim such illustrious men as friends and college-mates. I am not surprised, however, for R. E. was a brilliant fellow in college, and I always counted on great things for him.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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Well, Quiz, old beau, it is now growing late and the gentle folds of sleep beckon me to their sweet embrace. Within a few minutes I shall be in the realms of oblivion, and, as I wander lightly through the glades of slumber, may some beauteous dream of other times visit my pillow and cause me to live again amid the scenes of those joyous college days. Good-night.



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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San Francisco, Cal.,  
January 4, 1934.

Dr. J. E. Brunson,  
Editor The Outlook,  
New York, N. Y.

My Dear "Eddie":

Just after tea I repaired to the library for the express purpose of perusing the current volume of your great contribution to American literature, and, judging from the first two volumes of the series, I am electrified with anticipation of the pleasures that await me in this third volume. I trust that "The Rain of Swords" will not only meet with the approval of the American public, of which I am confident, but will strike the keynote of ap-



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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preciation in foreign centers of learning.

But alack! My dear Brunson, just as I would seize my paper-knife to cut the first page in comes "meine frau," all aglow with plans for our silver wedding celebration. I bore with her, stoic fashion, until she turned to leave me (sweet heaven, may she never, in reality!), and then I called for my instruments of smoking. And, as she always does, she didn't fail to give me a jab in the ribs respecting the pernicious habit. "Ah! Dittie, will you never get enough of your sublime weed?" Now, mark that epithet, Eddie—"sublime weed." Where have I heard that phrase before? You remember, don't you? Well, the falling of that phrase



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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upon my ear necessitates my laying aside your book until another time.

And so I am smoking and dreaming the lull of eventide away, my dear Eddie. My purpose this evening is to traverse the gulf of time and revel in the courts of days that are no more. And, as I cannot cross that abyss in person, I can cross over that great void by means of a figure and revel in the haven of my choice. Now behold the figure, Sir Edwin. I will place all consciousness of the present—which is the “sublime weed”—in my pipe, the altar of sacrifice. I will light this with the fire of imagination and such an atonement as I will offer up for my neglect to meditate over these olden times. Now as I light the tobacco and it changes itself into smoke and floats



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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away, even so do I resolve this present consciousness into reminiscent smoke, hoping that some gentle breeze of passion will waft it back over this chasm of time and let it hover in fondness over the scenes of college days.

Ah, there it goes! With the first puff of that fragrant weed my mind seems to leap from all bonds of the present and mount the wings of the wind. Back, back it speeds into the realms of forgotten joys, peopling the shadowy glades of long-spaced days with the living forms of friends and classmates.. Here it touches some dimly-remembered episode and there bursts into memory a glorious reality of pleasant but far-gone times. Now it hovers about the bier of some forgotten sorrow and a grinning ghost, in



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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sable pall, glides before my sight. But I am happy to say that I have remembrance of far more joy than sorrow of those four golden years.

Say, Eddie, tell me how I shall address a letter to old "C. E." Of course I know he is a fellow of mathematics in Oxford, but how shall I address him that I may rest assured he will receive my letter? You know it is now five years since I have heard from him. Well, old "C. E." was a great fellow. I suppose he now has a mass of curly hair on his head, wears glasses, is tall and slender, and calls out to the students as they enter his lecture-room, "Ha! ha! young gentleman. Yes, sir; yes, sir, walk right in, sir. Ha! ha! Good morning, come right in, sir." Do you catch the point, Edwin? So far



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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as courtesy is concerned, Professor Earle was the Sir Launcelot of the faculty.

Eddie, I wonder if you keep up your experiments in chemistry now-a-days? I remember how your room used to resemble Faust's laboratory. Do you remember one bright Sunday morning, in May of 1908, you pounded early and most vigorously on my door in quest of a hatchet. Runt Geiger answered the call, and, as I now remember, the conversation ran thus:

"Eddie, what in the mischief do you want with a hatchet?"

"Ah! shucks, beau, I want to chop up some zinc."

"Slush! what are you going to do with zinc, Eddie?"



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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"Oh! golly, beau, I want to make zinc-sulphate."

"Zinc-sulphate?"

"Slush! yes."

"Today?"

"Yes; why?"

"Thought you were going to church?"

"Oh! good golly, beau, good-bye; that's out of my line."

And away you went to make zinc-sulphate on that bright Sunday morning.

I wonder, too, if you remember a certain night old Joe King locked Runt out and wouldn't let him in. Runt tried in vain to effect an entrance, but neither might nor stealth were of avail. And Runt labored furiously on. After Runt had broken out a transom you



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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came upon the scene and, taking a hasty view of the field of action, departed. In a short time you reappeared, bearing proudly in your arms a chemical fire-extinguisher. This you delivered over to Runt, with explicit directions as how to operate it. Old Runt mounted a trunk and placed the nozzle through the broken transom. Then while you stood at a safe distance, like a prudent field-marshal, and directed the working of that formidable weapon, Runt sprayed old Joe with the extinguisher until he was forced to beat a hasty retreat into his closet.

Well, I did not follow the details of the siege, but I remember the terms of capitulation. Old Joe demanded that Runt should seek out six fellows with



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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lusty lungs to sue for pardon. Runt soon assembled his ambassadors, and lining them up abreast, before old Joe's door, they began the plea for Runt's pardon. As you remember Runt was something of a choir master. Well, these six fellows had to sing the plea, "Joe, oh Joe! grant that Runt may enter in at thy bower portal," one at a time and then en masse. This was sung to the tune of "Comin' Thro' the Rye." You know Joe was fond of "Rye." The last I saw of the memorable siege Runt was dressed in his pink nightshirt and directing his choir of ambassadors with great zest.

But enough of this now, Eddie. I fear I have shocked your scholarly nature by such idle talk. But you know, Eddie, I sometimes feel so boyish that



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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in spite of my forty-six years I love to indulge in these thoughts of college days. I promise you that I will read your book tomorrow evening. Good-night.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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Louisville, Ky.,

February 25, 1935.

Dr. Charles E. Richardson,  
Prof. Mathematics, Oxford University,  
Cambridge, England.

My Dear "C. E.":

As I sit tonight and contemplate that vast waste of waters that separates you and me, I am prone to think of that span of time, that separates us from the time we were boys together, as some such waste. What storms of trouble have swept in fury; what calms of peace have settled in stillness; what gallant ships of hope have sailed; what gaunt derelicts of disappointment have gone down on that billowy stretch. 'Tis true, some of us have not piloted



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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our crafts to such goodly havens as we might, but I am inclined to feel that whatsoever harbor one has gained by dint of honest endeavor that goal is best. For if we all sailed to the self-same port some poor wretch would be left standing on another shore, waving the signal of distress to an unanswering sea. How good, then, that our great Captain has given to some one talent and to others five talents. Thus, since I have sailed my craft into a lowly port, and brought good to one meaner than those who throng the shores of the high ports to which you and others of my classmates have sailed, I am content to strike my sails at last and drift into the Master's great port, feeling that I have been a pilot favorable in His sight.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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In a recent number of *The Outlook* I read a sketch of the great institution with which you are connected. The article in question was from the facile pen of my friend and contemporary, Eddie Brunson. It has been my purpose to write you for some weeks, but it seems every time I have a spare evening in comes my good wife with plans for our taking tea with some goodly neighbor. And then does the martyr don his evening clothes and set out for the scene of torture. My wife never fails to jab me in the ribs and exact a promise from me that I will treat our hostess, Mrs. Nailor, with civility. But oh, that old weather-beaten she-dragon is a pest. I wish you could meet her. Gee! she has the right name—except she is a “Nail-her” instead of a “Nail-



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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or.” For gosh! she does “nail” the good sisters of the commonwealth. I sometimes wonder if she doesn’t “nail” some of the hes too. And if she does, I can see myself now nailed to the cross of her gossip.

Or perhaps, instead of the plans of my wife, in comes bold Sir L. M. Glenn the Second, all furious with lust for war and in dire need of a charger powerful. Then must the proud daddy bend his weary form on all-fours and bear this young Galahad in quest of false knight, Paynim horde, or terrible dragon. C. E., I want to offer you a bit of friendly advice—pray the good Stork to drop girl babies down your chimney; this young barbarian will yet be my death.



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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But no, C. E., I am not sorry that my only child is a mischievous little boy. God bless my darling boy! For I know that these same chubby hands that now plough their way through my shock of hair, and cause me agony, will some day toil for my welfare when I am old and go tottering through the autumn of life. And he will some day stand by my easy chair and, while his heated breath is gently caressing the thin gray strands of my weary brow, he will whisper in my ear, "My father, I love you so." These little fingers that now clutch blindly at mine will some day close the cold lids over my glazed eyes. And these fat little arms that now encircle papa's neck will some day lay me reverently in my cold grave. And when I have sailed away



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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on the darkling flood he will isle my barge in the mist-hung offing, and these little eyes that now beam with mischief will drop tears in memory of me. Ah! C. E., I love my boy; I tell you what, I love him.

Well, C. E., I must tell you of the Furman Alumni meeting I attended last spring. It was the first sight of the place I had had in 26 years, and of course I was lost. I recognized very few landmarks. I will not go into details about the meeting—just one incident I wish to relate.

We were all assembled in the auditorium of the B. E. Geer Hall of Industrial Arts. It was the day of dedication for this new structure. I suppose the house will seat some 2,000 people. Well, the hall was packed to overflow-



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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ing and we were all waiting for something to turn up. All of a sudden a signal, seemingly, put a death-like stillness upon the chattering audience. There was a stir at one of the entrances and the throng gathered there parted. At the same time a small company marched down the aisle toward the rostrum. The house remained silent. There was another stir at the door and a slight, erect, gray-haired, old gentleman emerged from the crowd and started down the aisle. An awful hush brooded over the audience, like the lull before a storm, and then that vast crowd burst into such a deafening ovation as never before fell on my ears. But that grand old man moved on as unconcerned as though he were



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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strolling through a summer wood. Two young professors assisted him up the rostrum steps. When he had gained the middle of the rostrum he paused; turned slowly about; a smile played about the corners of his finely cut mouth; the light of heaven was in his face; his clear blue eyes twinkled with joy; he cast a rapid glance over the audience, and then bowed low. A roar of applause followed this, and as the old gentleman moved toward his seat a magnificent orchestra raised the Alma Mater. C. E., can you guess who the old gentleman was? Of course you know. He had given that magnificent hall to the University out of his own substance. He was the Sir Galahad of the faculty in our day; he is now the second Dr. Judson of Furman;



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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he was then, now is, and always will be just—Ben Geer.

It's late now, old boy, so I am going to close up. Good-bye.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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Chicago, Ill.,

February 4, 1937.

Admiral S. Haddon Geer, U. S. N.,  
Manila, P. I.

My Dear Haddon:

There's a lullaby in the sighing of the winter wind that appeals in some mysterious way to an old man, and he longs to bow his whitening head in slumber sweet and dream of wandering in sunny climes of days now forever sped. The years have dealt tenderly with me and my heart still beats with the vigor of youth. My cup is full of the sweets that come like a benedictory draught to soothe the spirit of an aging man. I have lived my life well and the future holds no



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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fears for me. But I will cease this doleful strain and play a lighter tune. There's a time of life when the heart-strings are a lute, and the melody thereof is sweeter than the aria of that first dawn when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. And, as that time of life is youth, I will take up the golden harp and smite on its sweetest cords with might.

My wife tells me that she is writing to Mrs. Geer tonight. This being the case, I have decided to write Daddy Haddon just for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne." And I have proposed that we see who can write the "foxiest" letter. Of course my wife will treat different subjects from those I am going to handle; but anyway, we have



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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determined to lay aside old age and dignity and turn young again just for tonight. I imagine my wife will discuss plans for some mother's club or else devise schemes for bringing "hubby" home early of nights. Just so sure as I am detained at the office later than my accustomed hour she vows right off that I have been writing love ditties to some pretty wench instead of editorials for the morrow's paper. She is not at all jealous-hearted, and I think she says those things just to tease me. But anyway, our home life is perfection itself. If anything, our love grows stronger day by day, if such thing is possible. So my sleep is not at all disturbed by visions of the divorce court. Gee! I had to work too hard to get her; and I am



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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sure the sea holds no other fish like her. If I thought it did I would write to our friend, Dr. Workman, and tell him to go fishing.

Well, Haddon, how many young "jackies" have you in your home that I may offer my condolences to? (Don't let Mrs. Geer see this.) I know you must be tired of so much of this, but you know when we were boys we said we would do just such things as I am now doing. Are they all boys or girls or are they variated? And what principle do you follow in rearing them? I remember saying that just as soon as my little fellow began to exhibit the traits of his daddy I was going to bring forth the rod and spare it not. But, Haddon, old boy, I just can't do it to save my life. Just so sure as I frown up



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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and reach for the rod the little fellow will look up sweetly into my face and babble, "Now, papa Dittie, mama says you used to be a bird, too." And then I snatch the little rascal up and cover his little face with kisses. Oh, Truth! thou doth soften the heart. Eh?

Say, Haddon, rememberest thou this phrase, "Hey there, pass around six more, please." Gee! I shall never forget that memorable occasion. Oh! well, I guess we had better forget that day and think on goodlier things.

By the way, I had a long letter from old Squirt Lanford several weeks ago. Squirt tells me that he is president of three other banks in the State of Missouri besides the Fourth National in Kansas City. And I have heard from other sources that his for-



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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tunes are fast climbing to the million-dollar mark. Well, I always believed it of him and am not at all surprised. Squirt was telling me how well pleased he was with his business, and how sweet his home life was, and what a fond father he had become. But I read between the lines on this point. He says to me, "Dittie, old boy, I have seventeen so far, but dare not make any forecasts. I am very proud of my brood and always thought them a good-looking set. But, bless my soul, a confounded old maid, living next door, said the other day, 'Oh, dear! I think those Squirt kids are simply darling, but upon my word they remind me of Chinese.' "

Well, old Squirt resented the good lady's remark and swore that he would



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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avenge the same. I can see him now returning home after a day's work and stepping cautiously over the floor for fear of trampling on some sleeping member of his brood. Well, I'll bet old Squirt is a dutiful husband and father. You know I am sorry old Squirt came so late into our class. But if any fellow could have wound himself about the heartstrings of his classmates in less time than he I can't imagine the one. I think old Squirt had one of the most lovable dispositions of any boy in college.

Haddon, old boy, I know I have the sweetest wife in the world. I sometimes marvel that she ever consented to cast her lot with mine. For eighteen years now we have sailed the seas of matrimony, and a dream of bliss has



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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been that voyage I have heard, in a round-about way, that she thinks I am the incarnation of the perfect in husbands. But heaven knows that if I have an ounce of worth in me, to her is due all the honor and praise. For it is by her faultless love for me that my life has been moulded into some shape worthy the name of man. Old beau, she is pure gold.

“Dear eyes, dear eyes, and rare complete,  
Being heavenly sweet and earthly sweet,  
I marvel that God made you mine;  
For when He frowns 'tis then ye shine.”

Suppose I had better close up now and compare notes with her. Good-night.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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Chicago, Ill.,

July 18, 1937.

Prof. C. M. Workman, M. D.,

Chair Gynecology and Abdominal  
Surgery,

University of Nashville,  
Nashville Tenn.

My Dear Old "Work":

There's a gay little songster sitting amid the flowers on the veranda and singing as though his throat would burst. And this is not the first time, either, that I have heard him sing. With the coming of spring this tiny singer finds his way to my house, and then for a summer he sits and warbles through the live-long day. Sometimes he strikes a plaintive note and I feel



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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a chill of sadness creep over me. Or again he bursts into an aria of tonal exquisiteness and my heart seems to leap with the song. Just why this little warbler should affect me with his melody I don't quite understand. But I believe it is because of the fact that I have conjured up a beautiful metaphor in the person of this sweet messenger.

I was sitting in the sunshine of a spring morning when I first heard him. He perched on a rosebush near me and broke into my reverie with a flood of sweetest harmony. And as he sat there and piped, first in a joyful and then in a plaintive strain and brought alternately to my heart sunshine and shadow, I thought him the ghost of my college days come to hover about my soul. When he sang happiest I



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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smiled and remembered some pleasant episode, but when he struck a plaintive strain I frowned and remembered some sad incident of those times.

I cannot say but that I love this little messenger, for his store of happy songs outnumber the sad ones; and I am always ready to drift back and live in those days again.

Well, Work, I heard from old Haddon a few days ago, and he is well pleased with the Philippines. He wrote very optimistically of the situation there, and did not seem to think the Japanese were ready to attempt a seizure of the islands. And I don't blame the little yellow-jackets either. For if they know Haddon as well as I do I think they would see the futility of scrapping with that gamecock. I



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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am glad to see him in such a responsible position and I am confident that our navy is in safe hands.

I also had a letter from another classmate of ours. L. T. Rhodes is living in dear old South Carolina on a large tobacco plantation. He was recently elected President of the Southern Tobacco Growers' Association. I understand he has a monopoly of that industry in that State. Rhodes was a great fellow and I am sorry I did not learn to know him earlier than I did. But such is life; we are like swine that root for corn and trample pearls beneath our feet at the same time.

Well, Work, how many glorious recollections of our college days might I call to mind if I only had time. As I grow older my thoughts turn more and



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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more to those years. Ah! what golden years they were. How well I recollect the boys and our professors. There is Professor Geer, to whom I often refer as the Great Eraser. For he more than any other man I know did more toward erasing the devil from my nature. When I came to Furman I was as big a devil as ever wandered in a howling wilderness. But as soon as I came under the influence of that man the process of elimination set in. And then for four years the crooks and twists underwent a straightening. I came out at last, not wholly perfect, but with a far deeper insight into what it meant to be a Man.

Well, Work, old beau, I feel that I have played my hand well in the



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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great game of Life. I do not mean to say that I am satisfied with myself—oh! never that. But I have made good in many ways. I have the sweetest wife and the dearest little boy in the world. I have made plenty of money. I have friends. I am not a stranger to fame. My profession has profited by my having worked honestly for its betterment. I have sought to make humanity happy. I have lived the good life. I think I may say the world is a mite better for my having lived in it. What more could man desire? But there now, I did not mean to toot my own horn. This just slipped out unconsciously.

Say, Work, I have been thinking of a plan to bring our crowd together in one big gathering some time in the



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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near future. What a joyous gathering that would be. I intend to begin letters to each member of our club right away, exhorting them to take some such action. Just thing of the crowd: President of several banks in Missouri and a millionaire, the President of Stetson University, Admiral of the U. S. Navy, a professor in the University of Nashville, a district attorney of New York (Joe King), and your humble servant. Let's get the thing up or "bust," old boy. Good-bye.



## H A R K I N G    B A C K

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Chicago, Ill.,  
December 16, 1936.

Mr. E. V. Lanford,  
President Fourth National Bank,  
Kansas City, Mo.

My Dear Old "Squirt":

What a glorious privilege it is to a working man to be able to take an evening off and spend it in solitude. I have quite willingly given this winter evening to musing by the fireside. As I sat half shrouded by the darkness of the room and gazed dreamingly into the fire I thought on Life. In some mysterious way I conjured up the fancy that that burning, roaring, fuming fire before me was like unto life in the youth. At that age his



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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breast is burning with the fires of ambition—fires that roar and fume and fill his ears with a strange, sweet music, deafening him to all cries of remonstrance of the sluggard. And so the fire burns, and heats, and expands, and ere the dying glow comes this youth has done things. And done them for the simple reason that those furious fires were not to be quenched and gave him no rest until something was done.

And now the fire has spent itself. The glowing heat dies down. One by one the livid embers turn a somber black and are lifeless. Here a faint sputter breaks out; there a blackening coal emits a fuming tongue of flame; a new light quivers through the dying mass and, for a moment, life again



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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asserts itself. It is not for long, however, for there's a crackling and a crumbling and the once glowing mass is now a heap of gray ashes. So does the fire of youth spend itself in old age. Little by little the glowing heat of ambition dies down. One by one the years fall away and the fiery youth turns somber in spirit and the call of time sounds a knell in his ear. In his childish old age he sputters and fumes against fate, and the light of youth again quivers through the withering frame. He seems as though he would live again. But there's a cracking and crumbling of energies and the once glorious youth is now whitening ashes of old age and death.

I was startled in my reverie by the falling of a chair, and I awoke to con-



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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sciousness to find myself in darkness and the cold of a winter night. Simultaneously with the vanishing of the fire a peal of thunder leapt from the night and went booming down the vault of heaven. A lurid flash of lightning swept across the sky and rolled back the mantle of black. The solid cloud-banks were rent asunder and a flood of moonlight poured upon the storm-swept earth. I had sat all unconscious of the gale that was sweeping over the lake. In a short while I again returned to thoughts of the fire and of life, as pictured by it. When I had seen the beautiful fire turned into a mere handful of gray ashes I asked myself the question, "What is the use? The fire is gone; the glow is spent; the heat is vanished; the energy



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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is wasted; and all for what? Is it not also true of life? Is not all the toil, the sorrow, the sacrifice, the joy, the gain, the glory reduced at last to a handful of ashes, or death? Was the fire of any use? Is life of any use?"

I was about to say no, when a faint noise at the door started me from my dream. In answer to the noise I found a poor, wet, hungry and half-dead sailor leaning against the door. I carried him in and by the light I found him to be an old friend of mine. I fed him and treated him kindly; and when he was ready to depart he told me of how his boat was wrecked in the gale. He said he was far out on the lake when the storm came down. His lights and compass were swept away ere he could save them. He was left in dark-



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

ness, with no goal toward which to steer. After floundering about in the oncoming gale he discovered a faint light on the distant shore and immediately set out toward it. On nearing the shore he discovered the light as coming through a window of someone's house. He landed just as the clouds cleared away and he saw that the house was not far distant. And, for some strange reason, he said he felt he would find a welcome in that house.

When he had finished his story and had departed I asked myself again, "Of what use was the fire?" Without the light of that fire shining as a beacon to the storm-tossed sailor he would never have reached shore alive. And when I thought of the life that the fire had







## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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though, it must have been on account of your remarkable ability to squirt repartee on any and every occasion. Well, Squirt, I am getting to be an old man now, and as I grow older I find myself turning back in my moods and, as it were, living in other times. I do not mean to say that the future holds no charm for me, oh! no, never that. But you know it is an old man's way to forget himself occasionally and turn boy again. And if I turn boy again what part of my past life can hold richer treasures than those four years spent in college.

Say, do you remember a game of football a bunch of us fellows played with a cocoanut one night in front of Chicora College? Great game, wasn't it? Ah! well, suppose we don't dwell



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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on the dark side of things. 'Let's talk of some of the good things we did while in college. Say, do you remember one night you and Haddon and I went calling at G. F. C.? You and Haddon tried to play a great joke on me, but I fear you two got the worst of the bargain. Well, my Rubicon was crossed on that memorable night and I was free no more. Say, do you remember—but there, now, my wife calls time on me and that means —— if I don't respond. Good-night.



## H A R K I N G   B A C K

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### EPILOGUE

Dear Boys of 1909,  
Furman University,  
Greenville, S. C.

How sad that I cannot meet with my old friends in their alumni gathering today. And though I cannot be there in person, I can, at least, be there with you in my thoughts. But why should I long to be there? For I am not numbered among you. I lack that small, rectangular piece of sheepskin with its few letters thereon, its specimens of signatures, its seal and blue ribbon attached thereto, which would make me one of you. But I have it not, so woe is me. My heart, the most I can give, is with you today, and for always. Good-bye.

Chicago, June 3, 1945.

[ Page 80 ]















FEB 18 1909







